UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/CONF.157/PC/63/Add.13
16 April 1993

Original: ENGLISH

WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Preparatory Committee
Fourth session
Geneva, 19-30 April 1993
Agenda item 5

STATUS OF PREPARATION OF PUBLICATIONS, STUDIES AND DOCUMENTS FOR THE WORLD CONFERENCE

Report of the Secretary General

Contribution from the International Council of Jewish Women

1. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 45/155 of 18 December 1980 a statement co-sponsored by 20 organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council was submitted by the International Council of Jewish Women to be circulated at the fourth session of the Preparatory Committee.

2. The statement, entitled "Older Persons and Human Rights", states that greater attention should be paid to the specific rights of older persons. Neither the Universal Declaration of Human Rights nor the other international human rights instruments specifically mention the elderly. The statement urges that this issue be addressed and suggests that States, in fulfilling their reporting requirements under the International Covenants on Human Rights and other relevant international instruments, include information on the elderly.

OLDER PERSONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The undersigned organizations are anxious to see all United Nations instruments on human rights applied equally to all human beings - men and women, young and old - and we believe that greater attention should be given to the specific needs and rights of older persons.

The elderly are the fastest growing segment of the population around the globe but their rights are still largely undefined, and action on a number of fronts is required. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenants on Human Rights and other relevant international instruments do not specifically mention the elderly in their provisions. While they constitute a "major group" the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) of June 1992 did not include the elderly among the categories of major groups cited in its document Agenda 21. Further, in many countries the rights of older citizens are still not recognized or not protected adequately.

Older persons see their rights eroded or violated in a number of areas. Many suffer physical and mental neglect, and even violence within the family. Their dignity is often destroyed through negative stereotyping by the media. Many lack adequate shelter, food and health care. They encounter discrimination in employment. Their economic security is frequently eroded and they lack financial resources of their own (the family is not the answer to all elderly needs). They may also be unable to obtain or to afford legal assistance if required. Cultural beliefs and practices of indigenous peoples are being undermined in ways that endanger the protection these peoples have traditionally accorded their elderly. Older persons are often denied the right to participate in decisions that affect them at the local, national and international levels.

In recent years the United Nations and some countries have begun to address the rights of older persons. We urge the World Conference on Human Rights to focus attention on protecting the rights of the elderly around the globe, and, in particular, to ensure that in the future:

- Both age and gender are considered in the preparation of instruments that deal with issues relating to employment, health, housing, economic security, food security, criminal acts and physical abuse, the family, media and indigenous peoples.

- The right of the elderly to present their own case is fully respected.

- States required to report on the implementation of the International Covenants on Human Rights and other relevant international instruments (such as those dealing with racial discrimination, discrimination against women, refugees, torture, apartheid, population, children, environment) are requested to include in their reports information on the elderly to be considered by the various bodies entrusted with the review of these reports.

- Data and statistics on violence against individuals are compiled and broken down by age and sex.

- The United Nations, governmental and non-governmental institutions work toward finding solutions for the long-term care of the elderly, especially those who are disabled, single and live alone.

- World Union For Progressive Judaism
- International Inner Wheel
- World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations
- National Council on the Aging
- Gray Panthers
- Catholic International Education Office
- International Organization of Consumers' Unions
- Association for World Education
- International Senior Citizens Association
- International Catholic Child Bureau
- International Association of Schools of Social Work
- American Association of Retired Persons
- World Federation for Mental Health
- Secretariado Nacional de Instituciones Privadas de Bienestar Social
- International Federation on Aging
- Altrusa, International, Inc.
- International Association for Religious Freedom
- International Council of Jewish Women
- Pan Pacific South East Asia Women's Association, Int'l.
- International Federation of Business and Professional Women

- - - - -